



In Iowa's Interest: It's Medicare Open Enrollment Time

by Senator Tom Harkin

Each year, seniors in Iowa and across the country have an opportunity to adjust their Medicare health benefits for the coming year. This seven-week period known as **Medicare Open Enrollment**, offers beneficiaries a chance to customize their Medicare plans to suit their current health needs. This year, Open Enrollment begins on October 15th and runs through December 7, 2013. The enrollment period offers seniors a chance to get a jump start on selecting their health plans for 2014, and ensures they will receive essential plan details and membership cards before new coverage starts on January 1, 2014.

To help seniors access information, answer questions about their medical coverage, and choose the best plan for their needs, the Medicare website – www.medicare.gov – includes The **Medicare Plan Finder**. The plan finder is a unique tool that conveniently allows seniors to compare numerous drug and health plans simultaneously. Additionally, the site breaks down monthly premiums, deductibles, co-pay levels, and prescription drug coverage.

The Medicare website also highlights the most popular and highly rated Medicare Advantage and prescription drug plans that have been reported by Medicare recipients. The highest quality plans received an overall rating of five stars with the best performers receiving a “gold star” icon. This guide can help Iowans analyze others’ experiences with Medicare plans and choose the plan that’s right for them.

I encourage all beneficiaries in Iowa to take a look at these resources. For more information about Medicare and the new changes, please visit the Medicare Open Enrollment homepage at <http://www.cms.gov/Center/Special-Topic/Open-Enrollment-Center.html> and Iowa’s Senior Health Insurance Information Program (SHIP) at www.shiip.state.ia.us for information specific to Iowa. Iowans who do not have access to a computer can call 1-800-MEDICARE for assistance in adjusting their benefits.

For more information, please visit <http://harkin.senate.gov/>, Senator Harkin’s Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/tomharkin> or follow him on Twitter <https://twitter.com/SenatorHarkin>.